



RE: Support Statewide Ranked Choice Voting, HB 2004
House Committee on Rules

3.15.23

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice Chair Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Danielle Maillard and I am with Oregon Walks, a non-profit that is focused on pedestrian safety and advocacy. We are part of a broad coalition of over 35 organizations, including culturally-specific organizations, labor unions, environmental groups, housing advocates, rural communities, youth-empowering organizations, and good government groups. I am writing to testify in strong support of HB 2004, which will establish ranked choice voting statewide and help ensure all Oregonians are represented in our democracy.

In our current elections, candidates in crowded races are consistently winning with less than a majority. Over half of statewide and federal races with more than two candidates won with narrow support in Oregon's 2020 and 2022 primaries¹, leaving voters feeling like their vote didn't count and unable to fully express their preferences. Fear of splitting the vote creates barriers for candidates to run and leads to voter cynicism. It's clear that our elections aren't serving voters or candidates as best as they could.

As an organization, we are far too familiar with the decisions that are made in regards to traffic safety that do not take into account the lived experiences of people of color, non-English speakers, low-income families, and people who depend on mobility devices to get around safely. Often, the needs of the communities we cater to are not represented by those elected to serve.

Ranked choice voting is a simple improvement to our elections that will lead to more reflective elected bodies for Oregonians from every community.

- Ranked choice voting leads to more reflective outcomes and better representation, a win-win for voters and candidates alike. By allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference, candidates are able to run without fear of splitting the vote and voters are given more meaningful choices, creating results that reflect the true will of voters. Ranked choice voting encourages candidates from diverse backgrounds to run for office, and cities that have switched to

¹ Oregon Secretary of State, [State of Oregon Elections: Election History](#)



ranked choice voting have seen more women, people of color, working class people, and young people not only run for office, but win.²

- In cities that adopted ranked choice voting, women³ and candidates of color⁴ have won 24% more races compared to non-ranked choice voting races.

Oregon Walks is a strong proponent of values-based decision making. We know that when people feel as though their voice is important and that their values will be taken into consideration, they are more likely to engage in important decision-making processes. We believe that RCV is a tool of empowerment, and gives a voice to our communities who are left out of decision making processes.

Ranked choice voting ensures that voters have more power to express their preferences and vote for candidates whose values they share.

- Under our current election system, voters feel pressured to vote for the “lesser of two evils,” and not for a candidate they agree with most or who they think would do the best job. Ranked choice voting will allow Oregonians to choose the candidates they like best, without inadvertently helping the candidate they like least.
- By allowing voters to rank candidates, their vote becomes more meaningful, has a greater impact, and, ultimately, leads to an outcome they are more satisfied with. In cities and states where ranked choice voting is used, voters continuously report that ranked choice voting is easy to use and understand.
 - Four out of five voters defined the new voting system as ‘easy’⁵ in Alaska’s 2022 General Election and, in Maine, 78% of voters understood ranked choice voting after the 2018 election.⁶
 - In exit polls across multiple jurisdictions that use ranked choice voting, on average, 73% of voters prefer it to our current system.⁷

² FairVote, [Data and Research on RCV](#)

³ Represent Women, [In Ranked Choice Elections, Women WIN](#)

⁴ National Civic League, [Ranked Choice Voting: The New Norm Across the Bay Area](#)

⁵ Alaska for Better Elections, [Polling Shows Alaskan Voters Received Clear Instructions on the System. Found](#)

⁶ FairVote, [Exit Surveys: Voters Evaluate Ranked Choice Voting After First Use](#)

⁷ FairVote, [Exit Surveys: Voters Evaluate Ranked Choice Voting After First Use](#)



With more than 60 jurisdictions using or recently adopting ranked choice voting, including four in our own state, ranked choice voting is a proven solution.

- Ranked choice voting is already here in Oregon. Benton County and Corvallis voters have successfully used ranked choice voting for their local elections, and both Portland and Multnomah County voters overwhelmingly approved the adoption of ranked choice voting this past November.
- With local jurisdictions already turning to ranked choice voting, it is essential we provide county clerks with tools for successful implementation, and not force them to reinvent the wheel each time. Creating a statewide ranked choice voting infrastructure will give local jurisdictions the resources they need to be successful whilst preserving election integrity.
- As a proven election reform with growing support across the county, voter education resources and strategies have already been developed. For other local jurisdictions looking to adopt ranked choice voting, access to these resources would help ensure all voters across the state understand and are comfortable with ranked choice voting ballots.
- By giving local jurisdictions the ability to opt into using ranked choice voting for local elections, HB 2004 will help to create an infrastructure with standardized, multilingual and culturally responsive voter education tools and resources that these jurisdictions can use in future elections.

Ranked choice voting is a proven solution and Oregon's next step in better representing all Oregonians. As a representative of Oregon Walks, we ask that you please support HB 2004 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Danielle Maillard
she/her
Walking Programs Manager
Oregon Walks